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“A Single Field of Labor” *(Manual of The Mother Church, Article XXVI, Section 7)*

1884 August 8

Mary Baker Eddy teaches the first Normal class at the Massachusetts Metaphysical College. These ten students go out as the first authorized teachers of Christian Science.

Eddy teaches eleven Normal classes at the College before leaving Boston in 1889. (Her final class, taught in Concord in November 1898, is also a Normal class.)

Few rules are in place for Christian Science teachers. A number of them lead a nomad-like existence, moving from town to town, taking patients and teaching small classes. (See, for example, the correspondence of Alfred Farlow.) Eddy is certainly aware of this, and, as far as is known, does not object to these itinerant activities.

In addition, it is not uncommon for a student to receive Primary class instruction two or three times. This is often the case when a teacher leaves an area; the student will take class again in order to have an association nearby (associations of teachers' students convene monthly, even weekly, in those days).

1891 July

In *The Christian Science Journal*, under “Questions and Answers,” a practitioner, identified only as “A,” asks: “Can some one, through the pages of the JOURNAL, tell me of an opening for a practitioner in Christian Science? I would like to engage more actively in Truth’s work than is possible to do here.... There is seemingly much error abroad, and I think it behooves those who know the Truth to be diligent in helping to spread it.”

The reply is probably by Sarah J. Clark, Editor of the *Journal*: “I would suggest to ‘A’ that this desire to leave the old field for new pastures, may be the action of error to drive her away.... Let us work where God has appointed us, turning neither to the right nor to the left.” The answer concludes: “If you will begin at home in this earnest way, I feel sure you will find it *very active work*, as much as you can do.”

- 1891 August
- A month after A's question, the *Journal* publishes "Advice to Students," a piece by Eddy that takes up a number of issues relating to the branch church work. Her final paragraphs, however, concern the issue of "fields of labor," possibly in response to the July *Journal* query.
- "I recommend that students stay within their own fields of labor to work for the race. They are lights that cannot be hid, and need only to shine from their home summits, to be sought and found as healers, physically and morally...." (This article is now found in *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, 298-303.)
- 1891 November
- Eddy reiterates and expands upon her *Journal* statement in the first edition of *Retrospection and Introspection*, which is published during this month. "The Evangelistic duty should not be so warped as to signify that we must or may go, uninvited, to work in other vineyards than our own.... Itinerancy should not be allowed to clip the wings of Divine Science." (Statements on the subject of fields of labor are found on pages 82-83 and 88-91 of *Retrospection and Introspection*.)
- However, a number of teachers and practitioners continue to move around, some wandering thousands of miles from their home base (as listed in the *Journal*). Eddy is aware of this.
- 1894 April 12
- Alfred Farlow, in a letter to Eddy, writes: "I have understood that your advice was and is that teachers remain in their own fields and not go away from home at all to teach." He is aware that others are traveling to teach. Eddy's reply is not extant.
- 1895 April
- The *Journal* publishes By-Laws on teaching, which are incorporated into the first edition of the *Church Manual*, which is published in September. These new rules do not address the issue of fields of labor.
- 1895 July
- A new By-Law, "Board of Missionaries," is included for publication in the (forthcoming) *Manual*. Missionaries are to be sent to "destitute" areas, as "tried, faithful, loyal healers and teachers."
- There is no evidence that any individual sent out under this By-Law teaches classes in Christian Science as part of the missionary work. (In fact, the reference to teachers is eliminated in 1897.) In general, missionary work most often takes the form of nurturing branch churches and healing discordant situations in branches. (In 1906 the missionary By-

Laws are altered to center on household help for Eddy, rather than on the Field. These are repealed in May 1909.)

The creation of the “Board of Missionaries” may be an indication that the purpose of Christian Science teaching is changing, separating from the formation of branch churches. (See March 16, 1896, entry for an illustration of how the relationship between branches and teachers was perceived.) The role of a teacher as the leader of a branch becomes less acceptable as the years go by, to be eliminated from the *Manual* with the disciplining of Augusta Stetson in 1909.

- 1896 February 26 Eddy writes to Julia Field-King, who is preparing to leave St. Louis, Missouri for England. She must find someone to take her place. “But that one must be located in the field of yours. Any itinerant Teachers...cannot do what is their duty to do well. He or she must be located where they labor in those departments” (F00120).
- 1896 March 16 The Directors adopt the following By-Law: “A member of this church, that is a teacher of Christian Science, shall take the entire charge of his students in Christian Science. If he changes his field of labor he shall resign his church in which he was First reader whenever he forms another church. He shall not transfer the care of his students to another student or a member of this church, unless that student shall teach them in a class of his own, thus through this church order thereafter become the rightful guardian of those students” (L00681). (The By-Law remains unpublished until later in the year [see entry for August 1, 1896].
- 1896 July 16 Eddy writes her student Joseph Eastaman, advising him not to teach a class of students of Stetson. (Stetson has apparently asked Eastaman to do this. It’s probable that Stetson’s request involved students who were distant from her teaching base of New York City.) She advises him to leave the teaching of the class to his wife, Mary Eastaman (L03492).
- Eastaman replies on July 17. He describes his healing work with great detail, and also mentions his extensive teaching of classes in both New Orleans and Memphis. (Eastaman lives in Somerville, Massachusetts.)
- 1896 July 19 Eddy replies to Eastaman. He does not have to dismiss his upcoming class in Memphis. “But you will see in our next Journal [August 1896, 238] that I have put up the bars that

have long been needed to keep my flocks in their own pastures(.) It is wrong to take students and then leave them to stray! No student can look after his students in a distant field” (L03493).

- 1896 July 20 The Directors adopt a By-Law requiring the excommunication of anyone who teaches the student of Eddy “or of any loyal Christian Scientist” (*Journal*, August 1896, 238) (L00688).
- 1896 August 1 The By-Law of July 20 is superseded by a new By-Law, which is published in the 5th edition of the *Manual* later in the year. “A member of this Church who is a loyal Christian Scientist, shall take the entire charge of his students in Christian Science. He shall neither permit them to enter another student’s class nor Association, nor himself to teach another’s student in Christian Science, nor to join another’s Association. If a member changes his field of labors he shall resign his office in the Church where he was located at that time. Failing to obey this By-Law his name shall dropped from this Church” (L00686, L00687, L00690).
- The new By-Law clearly states that a student cannot take Primary class instruction more than once, if taught by a loyal teacher of Christian Science, but it does not forbid itinerant teaching. However, class instruction is now more restricted, and there is an obvious need to avoid a situation where a teacher cannot take full responsibility for his pupils.
- 1896 November 13 Emma A. Estes, a student of Eddy’s, writes her, asking advice. “A call comes to me to go to Dallas, Texas to teach a small class and to help straighten out the tangles seemingly there. Is it wisdom to go to them or shall I insist on their coming to me?” (IC 92[c2]).
- Eddy replies on November 21. “The rule for teaching is not to teach in other fields than your own” (L12749).
- 1897 March 14 With the publication of *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, Eddy asks all teachers of Christian Science to refrain from teaching for one year.
- Annie M. Knott notes in her reminiscences: “Some who were ill-prepared to practice or teach Christian Science had been going from place to place soliciting students. This really seemed to discredit for a time class teaching.... (The March announcement) was followed by a great stir in thought, yet

loyal Scientists did not hesitate in obeying Eddy's injunction.

“Those who did otherwise actually separated themselves from the movement without any disciplinary action on the part of The Mother Church, in other words it was an important step in the separation of the sheep from the goats.” (Sect. 3, 5)

1898 September 29 An amended version of the 1896 teaching By-Law is published in the *Christian Science Weekly*. A new sentence is included: “He (i.e., a teacher of Christian Science) shall have but one field of labor in Christian Science, except it be in the capacity of a member of the Board of Lectureship.” The reference to the Board of Lectureship is removed a short time later, and is never published in the *Manual*.

1899 The 10th edition of the *Manual* is published. It includes a new By-Law, “Change of Location,” which cautions a teacher to “remain with his own students, association, and church.” (This is essentially the final two sentences of the September 1898 By-Law.)

1903 December 31 “A Single Field of Labor” is amended. The second sentence now reads: “He shall not teach a loyal teacher's pupil except it be in the Board of Education.” This first appears in the 41st edition of the *Manual* (1904) (L00847, L00370).

1909 October 9 The Directors write Eddy, suggesting several changes in *Manual* By-Laws. Among them is the final change to “A Single Field of Labor.” The first sentence, “A loyal teacher of Christian Science shall take entire charge of his pupils,” is to be eliminated. Eddy approves the change, which first appears in the 84th edition of the *Manual* (L01025).

No specific reason for the change is given; however, it is possibly a response to the manipulative activities of Stetson. (Stetson's card is removed from the *Journal* when she is placed on probation in September; she is dropped from the membership rolls in November.)

1909 October 18 Apparently after consultation with Judge Clifford P. Smith, the Directors ask Eddy if the By-Law “Change of Location” may be dropped from the *Manual*. “We seem to have outgrown this By-law and other By-laws now take care of points this one was intended to cover.” Eddy approves (L01031).

“Change of Location” allows for a teacher to choose his own

successor as leader of a church or association, and the change may have a connection with Stetson. However, at about the same time as “Change of Location” is removed, Bicknell Young, a teacher of Christian Science, moves from Chicago to London, England. At the request of the Christian Science Board of Directors (acting upon a request from Eddy), Young changes his field, and teaches classes in London from 1909-1913.

Records indicate that during this period Young’s association is held in London. His Chicago students annually assemble for the purpose of hearing a letter from him. This is reversed when Young returns to Chicago.